

## FY23 Budget: Support Immigration Legal Services

New York's investment in immigration legal services makes it the national leader in promoting safety, family unity, and freedom for immigrants targeted by federal enforcement. Among the state's pioneering achievements is the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP), a statewide public defender program that ensures lawyers for immigrants in detention. But thousands are still forced to fight for their lives in immigration court without a lawyer.

Funding for immigration legal services has remained flat since 2017, even though immigrants face persistently dangerous detention conditions and unprecedented challenges in immigration court. Investment in immigrant communities is more important than ever as the state confronts the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and federal immigration enforcement and detention.

ICE has detained more than 300,000 people during the pandemic, even as health experts warn that **detention poses acute risk to people held in such facilities** and the surrounding communities. **Without legal representation, release from detention is nearly impossible.** In New York State, there have been more than 1,500 immigration raids since 2015, and more than 140 since March 2020 alone. More than 400 anti-immigrant executive actions have been implemented in recent years, negatively targeting immigrants and limiting due process. **The radiating impacts of criminalization, mass detention, family separation, and deportation require bold and immediate action.** New York can pave the way for a new vision of justice for immigrant communities by strengthening NYIFUP and all of the state's immigration legal services. Fifty jurisdictions—including eight states—have joined New York to invest in programs like NYIFUP, including New Jersey, which doubled its deportation defense fund amid the pandemic, and most recently Colorado and Nevada.

**To defend the health, safety, and freedom of immigrant New Yorkers, New York should invest \$15.3 million in immigration legal services under the Liberty Defense Project and \$9.1 million in Office for New Americans programs in FY23.**

### Why should New York increase its investment in immigration legal services in FY23?

As the state endeavors to advance an equitable recovery from the pandemic, investment in immigration legal services, which unite families and help communities and businesses stabilize and thrive, is more important now than ever.

- **Dignity and fairness:** Everyone facing deportation deserves a fair day in court even if they cannot afford a lawyer.
- **Racial equity:** NYIFUP disrupts the pipeline that unfairly subjects Black immigrants to immigration enforcement.
- **Release from the danger of detention:** Immigrants in detention with lawyers are up to 10 times more likely to establish a right to remain in the United States. Forty-three percent of detained clients represented across the country through programs modeled after NYIFUP achieve release on bond or parole.
- **Stable families, communities, and economy:** Tearing immigrants—predominantly people of color—from their homes causes harm and insecurity that radiates throughout communities. An evaluation revealed that the cohort of clients represented through the NYIFUP pilot in New York City had lived an average of 16 years in the United States and were projected to contribute \$2.7 million in tax revenue each year. Nearly half the clients were parents, with thousands of U.S. citizen children.